

THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Council

7 July 1983

NOTE FOR: Amb. Steven Bosworth
Director, Policy Planning Staff

FROM : Charles E. Waterman
Vice Chairman, NIC

informal
A projective and somewhat unorthodox
analysis done by [] of our office
on the implications of a long Israeli/
Syrian stay in Lebanon.

Charlie
Charles E. Waterman

Attachment

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Assistant to the Vice President
for National Security Affairs

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Vice Chairman, NIC

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Israel-Lebanon: Implications of an Indefinite Stay in Lebanon

There is an increasingly good chance that Syria will not agree to withdraw its forces from Lebanon. As a result, Israel seems determined to keep its troops in southern Lebanon indefinitely. Prime Minister Begin probably will order only a partial withdrawal to a line running approximately 25 miles north of the Israeli border town of Metulla (see map) -- the original stated goal of last year's incursion before the IDF began the seige of Beirut. In effect, Lebanon will be partitioned on a de facto basis into Israeli and Syrian occupied zones with the Amin Gemayel government controlling Beirut and the Phalange Party militia controlling its traditional Maronite enclave around Jubayl north of Beirut.

This memorandum speculates on some of the longer term implications, particularly for Israel, of a prolonged de facto partition of Lebanon. The bottom line judgment is that, while the costs of a semi-permanent occupation for Israel are not inconsequential, they are manageable. Over time, moreover, the links between Israel and the "North Bank" are likely to become more extensive and, as a result, more difficult to sever. The Amin government will oppose these trends but has little leverage to halt them. Moreover, the central government and, more importantly, the Phalange militia is likely to remain closely linked to Israel and the US rather than turn to others, e.g. Syria, for support. For the US, this situation would be difficult, but not intolerable.

Security Implications for Israel

A withdrawal to the 25-mile line will not solve all of Israel's security problems in Lebanon but it could be a start towards bringing them under greater control. According to most sources, the attacks on IDF troops in the south (averaging 5-10 incidents per week) are primarily the work of Lebanese elements indigenous to the area, not outside Palestinian infiltrators. While a partial pullback would reduce IDF vulnerability by shortening some supply lines and removing Israeli forces from the volatile Shuf region south of Beirut, it would not halt attacks on Israeli personnel in the border area.

Over time, however, the Israelis would be likely to impose draconian security procedures on the occupied area similar to those they have used

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successfully elsewhere when confronted with sustained guerrilla/terrorist resistance. The Lebanese may be a tougher nut to crack but they also are vulnerable to extreme measures. While the local populace seems to be increasingly opposed to the Israeli presence and the various Lebanese leftist factions have long experience with small unit fighting, Israel has a proven track record of being able to bring unrest within manageable proportions. Forced expulsions, use of local surrogates like Major Haddad's forces, and ruthless counterintelligence operations will doubtless have some effect on the situation.

A major impact of such moves will be to reduce the cohesiveness between the south and the rest of Lebanon. As the IDF seeks to gain greater control over the area it will be forced to more rigorously restrict travel in and out of the area. The Lebanese government will protest such moves, especially to the US, but has little leverage on Tel Aviv.

Demographic Aspects

There are no reliable population figures for Lebanon -- the last census was taken by the French in 1932. The most recent GOL estimate for total population is 2.6 million. Perhaps 1 million live in greater Beirut. One recent estimate places the population of Lebanon south of the 25-mile line at about 500,000. The majority of those are Lebanese Shia Muslims but there also are substantial numbers of Palestinians around Sidon and Tyre, some Lebanese Druze in the eastern areas and a small Lebanese Christian minority along parts of the border.

These 500,000 Lebanese will increase the Arab population under Israeli rule and occupation to 2.3 million compared with 3.2 million Jews (roughly 600,000 Arabs inside pre-1967 Israel plus 1.2 million in the West Bank and Gaza Strip).

The Lebanese Arabs would have little in common politically with the Palestinians, however, especially since Israel would probably continue to acknowledge the principle of Lebanese sovereignty over the south, unlike its policy toward the Golan and West Bank. Moreover, the Lebanese Shia, who have developed a strong dislike for the Sunni Muslim Palestinians in their midst, are even less likely to seek meaningful political cooperation with the Sunnis inside Israel and the West Bank.

In sum, the Israelis are not likely to face a united Arab front from Lebanese and Palestinian Arabs but rather a divided population over which Tel Aviv can continue to exert political dominance. Even within southern Lebanon Israel will not face a united population but a deeply fractured community.

Elsewhere in Lebanon a de facto partition will leave most of the Christians under Phalange or Gemayel rule and most Muslims within the Syrian

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sphere. To some extent, therefore, a slightly tidier demographic picture will emerge. This will undo some of the effects of the 1920 French colonial decision to expand Maronite-dominated Mount Lebanon's traditional borders to include the predominantly Muslim districts of Tripoli, the Bekaa and southern Lebanon.

Two significant minority enclaves will remain. In the Syrian occupied zone, Christians will still predominate in the central Bekaa town of Zahlah (Greek Catholics) and in the mountains southeast of Tripoli (Maronites led by former President Franjiah). These areas are likely to be the target of Phalangist irredentism. The other enclave will be the Druze Muslim minority in the Shuf region south of Beirut. It will also be a Phalangist target once the IDF withdraws to the 25-mile line but the Syrians are likely to try to reinsert their influence into this area as well.

Economic Trends

Israel has already taken some moves to develop a closer economic relationship with southern Lebanon. Haifa has been promoted as a duty-free port of entry, diverting traffic from Beirut and increasing the south's reliance on Israel. Over time this trend is certain to become further entrenched. Practical realities will force the southerners to come to terms with Israeli currency and products as ties with the rest of Lebanon erode.

The Lebanese could also become another source of cheap labor for Israel much as West Bankers and Gazans have already been used. Even before last year's invasion Lebanese from Major Haddad's enclave crossed the "Good Fence" every day to work in several northern Galilee kibbutzim.

A key economic issue will be water rights. The Litani River has long been touted as the solution to Israel's growing water shortages. Any move to divert Litani water would be very controversial but is an increasing possibility.

Syria already controls the economy of the Bekaa. The Valley's most famous crop, hashish, will remain a staple of Syria's large "illegal" economy, as will smuggling. The far north of the country, known as the Akkar, has become a refuge for surplus Syrian labor, especially Alawite Muslims, seeking job opportunities. Some Lebanese claim up to 200,000 Alawites have emigrated into the north from Syria since 1976.

A limited economic revival may take place in reunited Beirut but no general economic reconstruction is likely. The Phalange dominated "Marounistan" is already a functioning state within a state.

Domestic Israeli Political Fallout

Domestic criticism of the Israeli role in Lebanon is certain to continue as long as the IDF stays in the south. Groups like Peace Now will strongly

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protest an indefinite occupation. The opposition Labor Party is already advocating a complete pullback. The key variable, however, will be the casualty level. If, as expected, the IDF gets a handle on the guerrillas in the next 6-12 months, domestic unease will decline.

Moreover, the lack of a viable alternative to IDF occupation will weaken the opposition. This would be particularly true if, after the IDF pulls back to the 25-mile line, the Lebanese army proves to be ineffective in restoring control over the Shuf.

On the other end of the political spectrum some ultra Zionists will push for annexing the south. Already some members of the Tehiya party have argued that the 1949 armistice line is artificial and does not represent the historic northern border of Palestine. Other ultranationalists have spoken about ancient Hebrew ties to southern Lebanon. While these groups are clearly now on the extreme fringes of the Israeli body politic the past experience of changing Israeli attitudes toward the West Bank, Gaza, Golan and even Sinai indicates that a long occupation develops ideological justifications.

Regional Implications

A de facto partition of Lebanon will have profound regional implications. Neither Tel Aviv nor Damascus is likely to take steps to formalize the situation but both will use their Lebanese surrogates as counterweights to the Amin Gemayel regime. Haddad or some other figure will be Israel's front man in the south and some day-to-day governing tasks turned over to him. Real power will remain in Israeli hands.

Amin's credibility as a national leader will erode but he will retain his enclave in greater Beirut. He has no viable alternative to staying close to the US. Many other Maronites in Lebanon will not be gravely alarmed by partition. Some influential Phalangists have long favored de facto partition since this would leave them with a smaller rump state with a Christian majority. These hardliners have good ties with Israel and can be expected to work to keep Amin off balance.

The Syrian-Israeli front line will remain tense. Air clashes, artillery duels and other incidents are likely and there will always be a risk of full-scale war. Nonetheless, the uneasy ceasefire could persist for a long time since both sides would have a vested interest in maintaining control over their spheres of influence and not rocking the boat. Over time a limited disengagement might even prove possible. Meanwhile, Syria will continue to extend its control over the Bekaa Valley and northern Lebanon -- areas it has now occupied for over seven years.

A prolonged stalemate in Lebanon will tend to detract attention from other Levantine issues, particularly the Palestinian problem. While Arab pressure to "solve" the Palestinian problem will continue, Lebanese concerns will inevitably distract diplomatic attention and resources. Lebanon will not

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eclipse Palestine as the Arab cause but it will complicate and confuse the issue.

The ongoing PLO-Syrian feud will determine how much influence an independent Palestinian movement retains in Lebanon. It is likely that some kind of Palestinian presence will continue, especially in the Tripoli region, but under greater Syrian control than in the past.

Finally, a prolonged Israeli occupation will complicate US-Israeli ties. Irritants are bound to develop over lesser issues like Litani water rights even if war-peace issues cool down. The US would be called on by both Israel and the Beirut government to referee disputes and "punish" the other. Israel would seek to keep these disputes contained in order to maintain a basically positive relationship with Washington.

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